

EZRA-NEHEMIAH, part 14 **Reformation Days, part 1 (Nehemiah 7)**

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I. The Importance of Reformation – Nehemiah 7 [History]

The primary focus here will be on the *function* of Nehemiah 7.

In Nehemiah 7:1-5, we have arrangements made after the completion of the wall:

- Appointment of people (7:1-2)
- Regulations about security (7:3)
- Indication of need (7:4; chapter 11 will address this problem)
- A piece of history (7:5; “what I found while rummaging through the file cabinet”)

In Nehemiah 7:5b-73a, Nehemiah reproduces the record found in Ezra 2. Besides this parallel, the text is also parallel to 1 Esdras 5:7-43 (apocryphal). On the differences between Ezra 2 and Nehemiah 7, Kidner¹ offers some orientation to the problem:

A comparison of this list [that in Ezra 2] with Nehemiah’s copy of it (Ne. 7:7bff.) reveals a startling contrast between the transmission of names and that of numbers — for the names in the two lists show only the slightest variations whereas half the numbers disagree, and do so apparently at random. The fact that the two kinds of material in the one document have fared so differently lends the weight of virtually a controlled experiment to the many other indications in the Old Testament that numbers were the bane of copyists.

The figure of 42,360 [in Ezra 2:64] appears as the total also in Nehemiah 7:66 and 1 Esdras 5:41, yet the individual items add up to three different totals, as follows: Ezra, 29,818; Nehemiah, 31,089; 1 Esdras, 30,143... There is general agreement that the divergences are copying errors, arising from the special difficulty of understanding or reproducing numerical lists.

But also notice the significant *parallels* between Ezra 2 (and into Ezra 3) and Nehemiah 7 (and into Neh. 8):

¹ *Ezra-Nehemiah*, TOTC, 38, 43.

<i>Ezra</i> (538 B.C. group)	<i>Nehemiah</i> (445 B.C. group)
Genealogical record (2:1ff.)	Genealogical impulse & record (7:5ff.)
List ends (Ezra 2:70): “And all Israel in their towns”	List ends (Neh. 7:73a): “And all Israel in their towns”
7 th month, & the sons of Israel in (their) towns (3:1)	7 th month & the sons of Israel in their towns (7:73b)
Assembly (3:1b) People were gathered as one man to Jerusalem	Assembly (8:1) All the people were gathered as one man to the plaza
Inauguration: Altar in the ruins (3:3,6) (1 st day of 7 th month)	Fulfillment: Law in the city (8:1-2) (1 st day of 7 th month)
Feast of Tabernacles (3:4)	Feast of Tabernacles (8:14ff.)

Observe the parallels; especially note how Nehemiah uses the same language following the genealogical parallel (e.g. how the lingo of Neh. 8:1 picks up that of Ezr. 3:1). But the gathering Nehemiah 8 describes is a wholly different gathering than that of Ezra 3:1. It occurs in the same month (7th month), yet some 90 years later. Nevertheless, the editor of Nehemiah wants us to view the two assemblies side-by-side. He wants to draw a distinct parallel between the watershed beginning in Ezra 3 (when the returned exiles began to build the temple) and the contemporary gathering in Nehemiah’s day after the temple had been rebuilt and the city restored. In this way the editor emphasizes that the occasion of Nehemiah 8-10 was as central and seminal as its earlier counterpart, namely the initial restoration under Zerubbabel. That had been the critical commencement, Nehemiah 8ff., in turn, is a kind of consummation. Thus, the covenant renewal of Nehemiah 8-10 can be seen on a plane with the temple restoration of Ezra 3. Ezra 3 stresses the people and *temple*, while Nehemiah 8 stresses the people and *torah*. Or, to say it another way, one pictures worship restored, the other depicts the word restored.

Look again at the inauguration-fulfillment category in the chart above. Childs² recognizes the climactic function of Nehemiah 7ff.:

² *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture*, 633.

Ezra 1-6, 7-10 along with Neh. 1-6 are only preparation for the climax of this sacred history which occurs in the combined activity of Ezra and Nehemiah in chs. 7-13.